

County to help fund local beach nourishment programs

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TOMS RIVER — Ocean County will assist municipalities involved in the long-term beach nourishment programs on Long Beach Island by providing half of the costs to be borne by the towns.

"Congressman Jim Saxton secured \$5.67 million to get this project under way," said Freeholder Director Joseph H. Vicari, who serves as liaison to tourism. "Ocean County will do its share to assist the municipalities involved in the project."

The Army Corps of Engineers executed an agreement with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection on Aug. 17 for the beach construction and periodic nourishment of this project.

The state is providing \$3,053,076 to match the federal outlay.

"The state requires municipalities to provide 25 percent of the state share," Vicari said. "In this case, its \$800,457. To assist the towns of Long Beach Island, Ocean County is proposing to cover half the cost to the towns — \$400,228."

Vicari noted that the freeholders included \$1.5 million in the county's 2005 budget to help with the local share for beach nourishment projects.

"This financial support shows Congress the county is very serious about these projects," Vicari said. "Ocean County's beaches are open to the public and enjoyed by millions of vacationers each year from all parts of the United States."

Preserving the coastline protects coastal communities from storms; it protects lives and property in addition to the health of the tourism industry, Vicari said.

"These projects are critical to the economic and environmental well being of the New Jersey coastline," he said.

New Jersey's coastal economy returns over \$3 billion per year to the federal government in tax revenues, which is used to fund a variety of programs including disaster relief throughout the nation, Vicari said.

The funds for the Long Beach Island project will be provided directly to the DEP through an intergovernmental agreement. The project is scheduled to begin next spring.

Joseph Picard

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